

RETURN to an Order of The Honourable the House of Commons,
dated 11th April, 1906;—for,

A RETURN of the Report of the Committee appointed to inquire into an
alleged outrage at Drumdoe House, County Roscommon, on the night
of the 11th day of July, 1905.

(*Mr. James O'Kelly.*)

*Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be printed,
2nd May, 1906.*

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1906.

THE ALLEGED OUTRAGE AT DRUMDOE HOUSE.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,

In obedience to the directions of the Lords Justices we held sittings at the Courthouse, Boyle, for the purpose of hearing such evidence as might be produced in relation to an alleged outrage committed at Drumdoe House, the residence of Mr. Edward Cole Magenis, on the night of the 11th July, 1905.

Mr. Magenis was represented before us by Solicitor and Counsel, and the Royal Irish Constabulary were also represented by Solicitor and Counsel.

Evidence was given by Mr. Magenis and fourteen other witnesses, including Ethel Coyne, formerly his servant, Patrick Higgins, his herd, and Philip M'Connell, his groom. These three witnesses were in Drumdoe House on the night of the 11th July, 1905.

Drumdoe House is situate on the shore of Lough Arrow, near the boundary dividing County Roscommon from County Sligo, and Mr. Magenis alleged that on the night of the 11th July and the morning of the 12th the house had been attacked by a number of men and fired into, with the result that six panes of glass were broken.

On the part of the Constabulary sixteen witnesses were examined, including District-Inspector M'Clelland, the officer in charge of the Boyle district, Mr. Pearson, then County Inspector of Roscommon, and County Inspector O'Connell of the Head Quarters Staff.

The case presented on behalf of Mr. Magenis was that shortly after 10 p.m. on the night of the 11th July two men were seen by the servant, Ethel Coyne, in a yard at the back of the house, and that afterwards a number of shots were fired into the house, breaking three panes of glass in the study and two panes in the room usually occupied by the governess.

It was further proved that at the time the attack began the only occupants of the house were Mr. Magenis and his servant, Ethel Coyne; but shortly after Patrick Higgins, the herd, arrived, having been attracted to the house by the sound of shots and the blowing of a bugle. Later on Philip M'Connell, the groom, also arrived.

Mr. Magenis gave his evidence before us in a very straightforward manner, and we placed great reliance upon it, as he was obviously a perfectly honest witness, whose only desire was to have the truth ascertained.

His servant, Ethel Coyne, was a witness of a very different class. She impressed us as knowing a great deal more about the events of the night of the 11th July than she was willing to tell. She admitted having given false information to the police, and stated that she considered this perfectly justifiable. We could place no reliance whatever on the testimony of this witness, and think that the suspicions which Mr. Magenis entertained of her and communicated to the police were perfectly justified.

It also appeared that on the 10th July, the day on which the threatening notice, afterwards found on the premises, purports to have been written, Mr. Magenis was absent the entire day, leaving Ethel Coyne alone in the house. There was thus ample opportunity for any person, with the concurrence of Ethel Coyne, to have access to Mr. Magenis's study and to the blotting pad where an impress of the threatening notice was afterwards found.

The case presented by the Constabulary authorities was that no traces of any missile were found inside the house, and that had bullets or shot been used, such traces would have been found. Evidence was given with a view of showing, from an examination of the glass and from experiments, that in two instances at least the windows were broken by the discharge of a blank cartridge containing a thick felt wad.

It was further suggested that the appearance of the broken glass showed that in one, or perhaps two cases, the shot that broke the window was discharged from inside the house.

In the case of one of the broken panes in study, a circular hole, about two inches in diameter, was made in the glass, and while the inner surface of the glass forming the margin of the hole was quite smooth and unchipped, the external surface of the glass was chipped in a very peculiar and suggestive way.

This chipping (which was spoken of as characteristic concentric chipping by the expert witnesses) was proved to exist at the point of exit of the wad of a blank cartridge, and we found, as a result of a number of experiments, that this is invariably the case. It appears to us certain that at least one of the shots was fired from inside the house. We are, however, quite satisfied that this was done without the knowledge of Mr. Magenis. He was in the upper part of the house at the time, and we think there was collusion between some of the occupants of the house other than Mr. Magenis and those outside.

On the whole case we come to the conclusion that Mr. Magenis was the victim of an outrage on the night in question, but one of a peculiar character. It had no connection with any agrarian agitation. There was no intention of inflicting any serious bodily harm on Mr. Magenis, the object of the outrage being to intimidate him. In our opinion no bullet or shot was used in any of the fire-arms discharged, as traces would inevitably have been left inside.

But as a result of the entire occurrence Mr. Magenis was put in great terror and sustained very serious inconvenience.

We also desire to add, that he was the object of unjust suspicion; and at the inquiry before us, although it was denied that any suggestion was made against Mr. Magenis personally, yet evidence was given which, if accepted, would have implicated him.

We declined to act on that evidence: we are of opinion that Mr. Magenis was entirely innocent in the matter; and further, that he was justified in taking any step for the purpose of demanding the fullest inquiry into the charges against him with a view to having his character cleared.

A suggestion was made during the case that the blotting-pad had been tampered with by the Constabulary after it was handed to them. There is, in our judgment, no foundation whatever for this charge. It was kept by Mr. McClelland in his own possession, and we fully believe his evidence that it was not in any way interfered with.

We have the honour to remain your Excellency,

Your obedient Servants,

DENIS S. HENRY.

J. H. H. SWINEY.